DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 113 102 RC 008 813

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TITLE Real, Regulated and Relative Poverty in the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands.
PUB DATE Aug 75
NOTE 42p.; Revised/expanded version of a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Rural Sociological Society (San Francisco, Calif., August 1975)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.95 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS Acculturation; *Cross Cultural Studies; Cultural Opportunities; *Depressed Areas (Geographic); *Economic Disadvantagement; *Economic Factors; Economic Opportunities; Ethnic Groups; Income; *Mexican Americans; Mexicans; Rural Areas; Socioeconomic Influences
IDENTIFIERS *Mexico; United States

ABSTRACT

The essay explores the extent to which poverty exists among the residents of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands. The sequence followed in this analysis is an initial clarification of some conceptual perspectives surrounding the problem followed by a survey of current economic conditions and growth potential for the Borderlands region. Following a brief overview of the salient factors associated with Borderlands poverty and those most closely associated with the economic activity of the region, the 3 dimensions of poverty in the Borderlands are outlined. These are: (1) "real" (or absolute) poverty, based upon arbitrary economic criteria; (2) "regulated" poverty, the differential rates of poverty existing among the dominant and minority segments of the Borderlands population; and (3) "relative" poverty which results from the use of varied, non-economic criteria for determining the degree of economic well-being. (Author/NQ)

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rec 11-09-75

ED113102

REAL, REGULATED AND RELATIVE POVERTY IN THE U.S.-MEXICO BORDERLANDS

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1975

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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This is a modified and expanded version of a paper presented at the Rural Sociological Society meeting, San Francisco, California, August 1975

RC 008813

REAL, REGULATED AND RELATIVE POVERTY IN THE U.S.-MEXICO BORDERLANDS*

This essay will explore the extent to which poverty exists among the residents of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands. The sequence to be followed in this analysis will be an initial clarification of some conceptual perspectives surrounding the problem followed by a survey of current economic conditions and growth potential for the Borderlands region. Following a brief overview of the salient factors associated with Borderlands poverty and those most closely associated with the economic activity of the region, the three dimensions of poverty in the Borderlands will be outlined. These are: real (or absolute) poverty, based upon arbitrary economic criteria; regulated poverty, the differential rates of poverty existing among the dominant and minority segments of the Borderlands population; and relative poverty which results from the use of varied, non-economic criteria for determining the degree of economic wellbeing.

Conceptual Considerations in Approaching Borderlands Poverty

A clear analysis of poverty as it is experienced in the Borderlands is possible only if the theoretical and conceptual ambiguities relating to this inquiry are first dealt with. In this essay three main considerations will be discussed. The problem of delineating "the Borderlands" and "the border" as well as its nature and normal function with regard to international activity, the diverse perspectives which approach Borderlands poverty as a total economic system or the population which suffers from the malady of low income, and the various dimensions of the term "poverty" will be investigated.

Although extensive discussions delineating and separating the terms "border" and "Borderlands" are available elsewhere[1], these will be defined to suit our present analytical needs. The Borderlands will include the two national land areas of the Mexican Borderland and the American Borderland, consisting respectively of the tier of six Mexican and four American states[2] whose boundaries coincide with the international border. A more restrictive term, the border, will apply only to the arbitrary political international boundary line and that thin line of county jurisdictions or urban municipios lying in juxtaposition to it. Due to the unique status of the major urban centers in the border area, including the twin border cities, these will be dealt with and analyzed separately in addition to being included as part of the border region.

Economists and economic analysts do not agree on the function of the international border nor what model should be applied in pursuing its effective economic development. One group (by far the greatest number) adopts the classical approach in which the greatest economic benefit accrues to all segments of the economic system when the exchange of goods and services are maximized through unrestricted free trade. In the case of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands, this might be called the "symbiotic approach" (Price, 1968; Dillman, 1969; Baerreson, 1972; Berni, 1973; Taylor, 1975). This approach perceives of the international boundary as an artificial political barrier which restricts the natural flow of peoples, goods and services across it. Therefore, legislative action is desirable which removes natural or imposed obstacles to the uninhibited movement of these commodities between the Mexican and American Borderlands. In connection with the free interchange of personnel and resources, the presence of a huge reservoir of untrained, inexpensive labor (both Mexican and American) accessible to border industrial enterprises attracts those industries which seek this relative advantage of cheap labor. These build up the employment roles within the region, spawning many secondary businesses and payrolls to service them, but they are "runaway" industries which flee from one region to another ahead of rising wage levels and labor costs. They do not build up the economic base of the region as would more basic industries. To facilitate the "symbiotic approach", an important initial step is the creation of a "free trade zone" along both sides of the border which guarantees a maximum of economic intercourse between the two countries with a minimum of tariff restrictions and import-export duties. Such a zone enables the development of "twin plant" operations[3] and extensive tourist activities with a minimum of friction and complicated regulations. With this in mind, the Mexican government inaugurated the National Border Program (PRONAF)[4], and further provided a positive lure for tourism by gasoline subsidies. Since the symbiotic approach maximizes its economic potential with increased trade flow, the acceleration of liquid assets (money) acts as a "multiplier effect" to generate a more adequate money supply which tends to increase expenditures and credit and some investment capital. When a national balance of payment deficit occurs because of the relative advantage of one of the countries over the other, this tends to activate governmental machinery for impeding the losses and the unrestricted trade period is terminated. When an accelerated economy shows a higher per capita income, this is considered a positive gain for the system with little regard for its selective or universal distribution among border residents.

In marked contrast to the symbiotic approach is the smaller but vociferous group of economic advocates supporting the "nationalistic approach" to Borderlands economics. Their view of the national boundary is one of an impermeable membrane through which restricted levels of economic activity might occur until, after careful monitoring reveals that a given international exchange is economically disadvantageous to this country or its citizens, the international threat to the internal economic system is effectively neutralized. An open border which results in a lowering of the quality of life in the American Borderlands is an anathema to the "nationalists" irrespective of any other economic good which this condition might yeild to the overall economic system itself. They fear that in a case where two unequal economic systems allow the unrestrained flow of market conditions involving supply and demand of labor and products, it tends to reduce the inequality between the income levels in the two systems at the expense of the higher income nation, in this case the United States. Moreover, they point out that unrestrained competition between labor groups in unequal income countries might yeild business profits to the high income nation, but at the expense of the poor and unskilled workers of that same nation.

An overall per capita income increase within the American Borderland is no guarantee for less poverty among its minority peoples-- Amerindian, Mexican Americans, Blacks-- who historically have not benefited perceptibly from such economic developments. Further, the nationalistic group points out that border residents are forced to subsidize cheap foreign labor since local taxes must provide the social and medical services to the impoverished non-citizens in their midst. Even the transient tourist places an increased burden on local public services and facilities and is often attracted from governmental (tax-supported) efforts at advertizement and promotion. They point out the hypocracy of industrial organizations and corporate structures who publicly support legislation to curtail public use of facilities and services by aliens (and thus lower the tax rate) while at the same time covertly using alien workers or the threat of employing aliens to create a submissive and loyal labor force. Hence, the "nationalistic approach" is more people-oriented rather than economic-system oriented(AFL-CIO, 1970; Briggs, 1974,1975; Portes, 1974a).

Regardless of which of these approaches is used to reduce Borderlands poverty, poverty itself must be more carefully defined and some of its dimensions made explicit. The arbitrary economic level of under $3,000 annual income made a facile indicator for launching the Great Society programs a decade ago. However, many poverty experts caution that even though a low monetary income is the criterion for recognizing poverty peoples, the simple

lack of money is not the underlying cause of poverty. Rather, for them it stems from background training, a product of cultural determinism-- "a cultural incapacity to make use of income" (Banfield, 1970:126; also Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961; Madsen, 1964; Heller, 1966; Rubel, 1966 etc.) Although the lack of overwhelming visible successes from the War on Poverty programs may have given some credance to the cultural determinist position, it is more likely that the ineffectiveness was a product of middle class functionaries overseeing overstocked bureaucratic organizations which were to penetrate lower class areas. While assuming that the pouring of huge expenditures into a poverty area would naturally filter down and be distributed equitably among the more needy families, they ultimately made the target cultures their scapegoat for poverty program failures.

To focus on the causal factors of poverty, two polar orientations provide their respective frameworks. On the one hand, poverty is explained as the inevitable result of an exploitive economic and social system which is institutionalized for the protection and perpetuation of a select group in power at the expense of poverty peoples, chiefly racial/ethnic minorities. Thus, poverty and its solution is seen in terms of bringing about wholesale changes in the larger social system. On the other hand, poverty is explained as a function of the very people who live in its bondage-- such as moral imperfections which prevent financial success, basic character weaknesses associated with low motivation levels, a situation conditioned by Fate or a result of God's Will, or as a group, a disadvantaged or racially inferior people fulfiling their mediocre destiny. Although liberals generally support the former position and conservative elements the latter, most scholars mix some elements of both orientations. Castro (1972) discusses four ideological approaches to Chicano poverty which not only reflect these two orientations, but also include dominant and minority reactio

The causes and cures for poverty advanced by minority group members varies considerably, depending upon their present socio-economic position. Middle class members, ridiculed as cultural "sell-outs" or assimilationists by their lower class cohorts, see the adaptation of educational and compensatory training combined with legal restrictions against minority discrimination in the labor market as the cures for perpetual poverty among minorities. Lower class minority enclave residents, confusing ethnic/racial values with those of a given social class, assume that all white members of society are wealthy and only minorities constitute the poverty group. While they accept as their own leaders persons of similar socio-economic standing within their ethnic/racial group, their rhetoric to explain poverty and its causes is often borrowed from conflict theory and, although mostly unintelligible to them, provides a source of autonomy and pride.

As perceived by the romantic humanists, minority peoples living in poverty are quaint, exotic but simple cultures which ought to be preserved within the context of "cultural pluralism". However, the economic responsibility for their existence is shifted from the group itself to permanent public subsidies, thus placing this small laboratory of cultural diversity in an eternal state of non-change linked with economic and cultural dependancy. Seldom is the need for developing minority self-sufficiency stressed as a possible option within the cultural pluralism approach.

The broad differences between the simple $3,000 annual family income criterion and the complex social and cultural criteria related to poverty life styles signal the need for treating poverty as a multifaceted, complex phenomenon rather than assuming it to be a unidimensional level on a family income scale. For this reason the poverty concept has been further reduced to three separate dimensions for greater precision in our Borderlands analysis. The first of these is called real (absolute) poverty, a condition reflected by formal income levels (initially set at $3,000 or less annual family income). The second is called regulated poverty and deals with the maldistribution of poverty among select ethnic groups which cannot be explained by objective factors associated with low income potential. The third dimension of poverty is concerned with the changing self-perceptions of ones own wellbeing, varying according to what standards or reference group is used as a basis for comparison and is called relative poverty. Following a background discussion of the broad economic conditions and potential for industrial development in the Borderlands, these three poverty dimensions will furnish the conceptual categories for a more detailed analysis of poverty in this region.

Economic Conditions and Potential Affecting Borderlands Development

Because of the special conditions facing the Borderlands economy in its development, this descriptive background will summarize four major aspects of the problem. These are a) the region's geographical-spatial features as a contributor to economic growth; b) the potential of extending the region's economic base through increasing basic industry; c) special political-economic consequences resulting from the presence of the international boundary; and d) a demographic description of border peoples in light of possible poverty-perpetuating factors.

The region encompassing the four U.S. border states and their six Mexican counterparts is characterized generally as a semi-arid zone, sparsely populated and sprinkled throughout with a limited number of urban centers isolated from one another by vast expanses of open land. This combination favors a low

intensity land use pattern of ranching, or farming along the Rio Grande sector. More than one-half of all manufacturing units are contained within one county-- San Diego-- and although valuable mineral resources are present within the region, these are not readily convertible to a steel-based heavy industrial complex characteristic of the Northeast and Midwest regions of America or the Altos Hornos complex in Mexico. The vast amount of space between settlements in the region leads to increased social costs for services (Kraenzel, 1968) such as medical and social services, elementary and secondary education, and governmental administration and regulatory agencies. As related to potential economic expansion, it lacks the highly populated markets nearby which could absorb the products of increased Borderlands industry. Only light industry which seeks the relative advantage of a large, unskilled and therefore inexpensive labor force, such as the needleworking industries, can survive in such a milieu without subsidization of some form.

During the mid-1960's, a joint Commission on Development and Friendship (CODAF) was formed between Mexico and the United States to foster the development of the Borderlands region. A volume of material was assembled assessing the industrial and employment potential of the region, and its summary conclusion was that the region is far behind most other areas of the United States in industrial development and that prospects for change were extremely poor (E.D.A, 1968). The attraction of industries producing products of style, design, research and the like, all of which use a relatively high ratio of sophisticated talent and highly trained personnel, are ideally suited for the region, some being located in Southwest urban centers-- San Diego, Phoenix and Tucson. But in a realistic sense, the general unavailability of such expertise, the lack of physical proximity to related industries needing their products and services, and physical and cultural isolation felt by corporate and specialty personnel in all but the major border communities makes this type of development more of a hope than a serious option. The unique character of the border region makes it highly suited for tourism, but because tourism has a more or less fixed demand curve, prospective tourist business must be lured away from their present tourist meccas to the various border locations-- a highly competitive enterprise dealing with a most capricious clientele.

Within the American Borderland there is little investment capital. The low wage rates produce limited savings reserves and economic development is left largely to the whims of investors from outside the region. Unfortunately, its relative economic advantage is its large numbers of unskilled workers which draws to the region those types of industries with the lowest wage rates in

the nation. This further depresses regional economic growth.

Any economic or political agreements which seek to coordinate the resources on each side of the international boundary require the action of the federal government of both nations. Bi-national cooperation brings together representatives from Washington, D.C. and Mexico, D.F. to consider formal regulations affecting international activity-- including those strictly of local interest. The federal decision-making machinery considers border regulations strictly as a form of maintaining territorial integrity and national pride. Broad policies with administrative structures and regulations to match fail to consider the wide variations along the nearly 2,000 mile border. Ten distinct sub-regions with common local resources and traditional economic and social ties were found to exist along the full border area by the CODAF-sponsored research team (E.D.A., 1968:9). To correlate these with an unyeilding set of federal policies and regulations requires that local border development must fight not only their relative resource disadvantages of the physical characteristics of their region but also the international agreements which often stifle local border initiative. Recent efforts to unite border states into a compact or lobby group to adapt federal-level policies and planning to the unique Borderlands conditions has been advocated by Texas state representative Finney (1975) but whether it is politically feasible remains to be seen. Until such time as this imput becomes operative, the border twin cities[5] who are well aware that their own economic futures are inextricably enmeshed with that of their sister communities, must carefully curcumvent the national legislative obstacles of their respective governments through informal diplomacy and cooperation.

To most citizens in the Borderlands, employment and jobs are different names for the same thing. But for this essay it is necessary to differentiate between them. Employment is an economists term for work which results in a saleable product or service which will pay for its own cost of production and result in additional wealth or profit. A job, on the other hand, is a political term which implies a work position which distributes money (usually from tax revenues) throughout the population. Expanding the number of jobs in the border region allows many families to live and pay their bills but does nothing to create a broader economic base or bring in outside wealth from products produced. Since the nature of the international border is an artificial obstacle to free interchange of people and products, many jobs are created to regulate and control the border flow so that these energies are siphoned off from the private sector for the production of goods and services. Thus, the border region has a plethora of jobs with a corresponding paucity of productive employment. As Table 1

clearly shows, the border economy is heavily dependent on public expenditures to sustain its vitality and to furnish the greatest proportion of its economic growth. Federal expenditures in border counties averaged $1,033 per capita in 1967 as compared with $853 per capita throughout the rest of the United States (E.D.A., 1968:208, table 45). This is a somewhat dangerous situation considering the capricious nature of our national political structure which might pump large sums of public monies into a given region and then abruptly curtail their spending altogether. These stochastic fluctuations leave secondary and even tertiary businesses which have serviced and supported the federal programs in a state of economic collapse and the entire local economy in chaos.

[Table 1 about here]

In the six major American border SMSA's which appear in Table 1, military expenditures were one of the major growth factors prior to 1960. Since that time, an acceleration of government spending, increasingly from state and local expenditures, has maintained the border economy. Inasmuch as the border area by itself does not attract heavy industry and is limited in employment capabilities, a strictly economic solution for the emaciated border economy is either improbable or impossible. Yet, the trend toward creating more jobs which must be assumed by the already tax-burdened border communities, is self-defeating as a long range solution to poverty incomes, treating the symptom instead of the disease.

Agriculture has traditionally been a low wage industry except for the corporate agri-business enterprises spawned since World War II. It is well suited to this semi-arid region with its large labor pools of unskilled, unemployed workers. Joining them in the border are the traditionally low wage needlework industries (i.e. clothing manufacturing, shoes, gloves etc) which create some employment opportunities but do not raise wages much above the poverty level. Moreover, since the latter organizations employ an extremely large proportion of female labor, the sex wage disparity becomes even more pronounced. With the border economy resting upon these low wage industries and little hope of large amounts of external investment capital to build up the economic base of the region, the border will continue to be a system of dividing up and sharing scarcity-- a perpetual system feeding upon itself to survive.

A full demographic profile of the U.S.-Mexico Borderlands reveals the presence of many factors which contribute to economic poverty, but it provides few clues as to what programs might be feasible to reverse the trends of border poverty. The major sources of analyzed data from the U.S. and Mexican Census give general background trends from 1950 and 1960 with only selective information available for 1970[6] (Beegle et al., 1960; Browning and McLemore, 1964; Skrabanek

and Upham, 1974). Generally, the Mexican and American Borderlands are atypical of their respective nations, even moreso in the border area itself. But whereas the American border contains an area with a much higher saturation of poverty than elsewhere in the Borderland or the nation, in Mexico poverty decreases somewhat as the jurisdictions in close proximity to the international boundary are compared with the rest of the nation.

The six Mexican border states have a larger proportion of their total population under the age of 20 than do the American border states. Likewise, the fertility ratios in Mexico are much higher than in the American Borderland. Mexico maintains a high national illiteracy rate wherein one-fourth of its population are classified as illiterate. In comparison, the Mexican border municipios have a much lower illiteracy level than their states and the national average. And although the Mexican border area has a greater proportion of its residents in the age bracket of 20-40 years, it has a lower fertility rate than the Mexican Borderlands as a whole.

The average family income is extremely low throughout Mexico. In 1960, more than 77 per cent of the national population reported an annual family income of $80 (U.S. dollars) or less (Corwin, 1973:574), but a recent study of Cd. Juárez and its environs revealed a reported family income in the suburbs (Colonias) above the national level and for the municipio itself a higher level than both the national levels and its colonias. As seen in Table 2,

[Table 2 about here]

42 percent of all Mexican families had yearly family incomes under $500 (U.S. dollars) whereas half as many in Cd. Juárez and surrounding areas lived as poorly. This overall prosperity pattern of northern Mexican states and especially its border municipios continues to lead that nation's accelerated drive toward industrialization and economic development. And the traditional extremes of income and educational levels in that country, though still very prominent in the social and economic structures, are beginning to weaken and the emergence of a more broadly based middle class is clearly emerging.

Even a superficial glance at the demographic composition of the American Borderland produces some overall patterns. In the higher levels of income, education and occupational prestige are found Anglo Americans in disproportionate numbers, while at the bottom levels of the pyramids are found heavy concentrations of Amerindians, Mexican Americans and Black Americans. But significantly different from the patterns in the Mexican Borderland, on the U.S. side the four border states have lower average income and educational attainment as a region than the nation as a whole, and as one approaches the inter-

national border these averages become even lower still. Hence, the Mexican border has less poverty than its border states or nation whereas the American border has far more poverty than its border states or its nation!

Beginning with the 1950 U.S. Census, the data for Spanish surname Americans were published separately. The most thorough demographic analysis of every county and its Mexican equivalent throughout the Mexican and American Borderlands was completed by scholars associated with the Carnegie Border Project at Michigan State University (Beegle et al., 1960). Having summarized the data for the Mexican Borderland, we turn now to the American Borderland region with special interest in the comparisons between Anglo Americans and Spanish surname populations of this area.

The Spanish surname population is extremely youthful as compared to the U. S. averages. Their fertility rate of 720 is very high when compared to the Anglo rate of 458. The Spanish surname population has less formal education, has a lower median family income by one-quarter to one-half of the median income of Anglo families, and is more heavily concentrated in rural areas and agricultural occupations. Except for the extensive urban migration of the Spanish surname population in these last twenty-five years and the conversion from agriculture-related employment to manual occupations in the urban environment (in 1970 the Spanish surname/language population was more than 80 percent urban residents), the ratios if not the actual percentages have remained surprisingly unchanged throughout most of the Borderland. The best gains in education level by Spanish surname people occured in the state of Colorado[7] with significant gains registered also in California, but only moderate to little elsewhere.

Browning and McLemore (1964:64-66) discussed this continued disparity between Spanish surname and Anglo Texans in terms of assimilation rates[8] which are slowed appreciably in border counties with high concentrations of first generation Mexican immigrants and other Spanish-speaking residents. This high ratio of Spanish surname families is thought to insulate them from contact with Anglo families and the larger society, blunting their contact and familiarity with the skills needed for economic and social mobility. Uhlenberg (1972) compared the Spanish surname Americans with Japanese Americans as to their successful economic and occupational ascent from their relatively low socio-economic position more than a half-Century ago. Both were visually distinctive from the dominant Anglo peoples, and both had a mother tongue other than English. In four generations, the Japanese Americans had, through late marriage, limitations of two children per family, and having their family after their career training was completed, risen to near the top of the American socio-economic pyramid. The Spanish surname population, on the other hand,

with a pattern of early marriage, high fertility rates and, because of the large dependency ratio, little career training, remain concentrated in the lower socio-economic levels.

The present Borderland population is excessive for the employment opportunities provided within the region and with an extremely high, continuous fertility rate, the glut of overpopulation for the economic resources is readily apparent. Outmigration is frequently suggested as the best possible solution to this problem, but an intensive border research study summarized this possible solution as follows:

> Emigration from the border areas... decreases the pressure of poverty but is not enough to equalize its per capita incomes with the national average. Nor will emigration alone accomplish that objective (E.D.A., 1968:2)

Hansen and Gruben (1971:113) found a considerable willingness on the part of young Mexican Americans (especially females) to leave south Texas for economic opportunities elsewhere. But three-quarters of those actually migrating from the area are males, especially young ones with a higher than average educational level-- those with the very skills so urgently needed in any future plans for border development.

Agricultural migrants emigrate from the border region as a family, dropping out of the migrant stream in the Yakima valley, Salt Lake City or Denver, Traverse City or Flint, or Lubbock. There they have some opportunities for their children's education, but their previous life style has given them little skills for successful competition in middle class schools, and their geographical relocation does little to raise them from the poverty level. As the border research study continued:

> The disadvantaged border residents who do move away will become disadvantaged urban slum residents unless their capabilities are raised to permit them to enter the productive processes of the Nation (E.D.A., 1968:2)

Empirical comparisons of Milwaukee Spanish-speaking children with Mexico-born and Texas-born inmigrant children shows that those from Texas have the poorest performance of all, the foreign born Mexicans a little better, and stable, local Milwaukee Spanish-speaking children the best by far (Matthiasson, 1968:44) so apparently little is being done to raise border children's capabilities according to this research and others like it.

What about relocating border Mexican American adults for occupational opportunities elsewhere? Such a project attempted to relocate and train south Texas Mexican Americans to work in Dallas industry. There was very

little success among the "hard core" unemployed of that region (Ruisink et al., 1969) and only the adults who became more materialistic and adopted more middle class social characteristics became highly successful with the relocation (Ruisink and Kleibrink, 1970). Inadvertently, this research/social action project demonstrated that it is far more profitable for industry to move persons from the border area than to relocate industry in that economically depressed region.

In sum, the American border economic growth rate is far below the national average. Unable to lure basic industries to the area with which to build a stable economic base, the low income industries which are attracted to the large reservoirs of inexpensive labor perpetuate the low incomes of the region. Even the high outmigration rate cannot neutralize the growth rate from the high fertility ratios. Economic growth in the American border has been dependent largely upon governmental expenditures-- initially military, then federal non-military, and increasingly state and local-- a perilous reliance upon the caprice of bureauctatic spending cycles. This increased financial support from the private sector combines one of the most rapid tax rate areas with a population least able to bear the taxation because of the low per capita income of the border. Without outside stimulation to the economy, or massive changes in the areas resources and technology[9], there is little promise for stable economic growth in the American Borderland.

Having laid out the reginnal resources and problems related to a deficient border economy, we now turn our attention to a more detailed examination of the kinds of poverty and the extent to which they are found in the Borderlands.

Real Poverty in the Borderlands

In the American Borderlands, real (or absolute) poverty as measured by an annual family income below $3,000 is overly abundant. However, not all states or areas within the states share it equally, as shown in Table 3 below.

[Table 3 about here]

The average of 19.8 percent of families in the Borderlands with poverty incomes is signficantly different from the ratio of each state. For instance California families in poverty is only 14.1, with Arizona and New Mexico an intermediate 21.3 and 24.4 percent respectively. Texas, with the greatest amount of poverty of any Borderland state, has 28.8 percent of its families with poverty incomes. This has changed little by 1971 when more than one-half of all poverty families in the American Borderland were residents of Texas. These 2.5 million Texans constituted about 22 percent of that state's total population as compared to the national level of but 13 percent(T.O.E.O., 1973:42)

Not only is poverty concentrated in some border states more than others, but there are vastly different poverty ratios within each state. As one compares the median family incomes within the Borderland counties, as one approaches the international border income levels decline sharply. The obvious reciprocal is that poverty ratios are much higher in border counties than throughout the state generally. Although the 1970 census indicates the median income of Texas families to be $8,490 (only $1,100 below the U.S. average of $9,490), yet, median incomes in Texas border counties are about one-third the U.S. average. In Texas border counties, one in five adults have no formal schooling while two-thirds of them have completed less than 8 years, far below the Texas average which is below the U.S. average. In the border, the unskilled occupational category, the ratio of low incomes and high unemployment rates complement the low educational levels, even more prevelant among the rural folk than the urban but both living submerged in a poverty-dominated area.

Following the pattern of poverty families increasing from California to Arizona to New Mexico and to the high level in Texas are the level of personal income statistics. Referring back to Table 1 (p __) it is clear that personal income in San Diego, the high of $3,149, shows a level of real prosperity whereas the low personal income levels of the Texas border communities of Laredo and McAllen reflect an anemic $1,250 and $1,379 respectively. A recent news magazine article describing the poverty conditions in American cities singled out border centers for special consideration.

> A Department of Commerce study recently named the McAllen metropolitan area of Texas the poorest in America. Personal income per capita here is $2,343 annually against a U.S. average of $4,492 and a statewide figure of $4,045. About 145 miles to the west, Laredo ranks as the nation's second-poorest area. Per capita income: $2,516 a year. Fifty miles to the east, Brownsville on the Gulf of Mexico ranks third, with incomes averaging out at $2,607 annually per person. Things get even worse in rural areas of south Texas, where income per capita in some isolated counties runs as low as $1,300 a year (U.S.N., 1974:45)

Note that the perceptible dollar increase between the earlier 1966 personal income and 1974 per capita income only managed to juggle the order of Texas cities and their poverty, but still considered them at the very bottom of the poverty barrel. And elsewhere along the Texas border, the urban center of El Paso ranks in the bottom 5 percent in per capita income among the 246 SMSA's in the United States. Real poverty is a permanent ingredient of border life!

Statistics for the Mexican Borderlands are not generally available and have not been analyzed and published to the extent that those from the American

Borderland have been. But referring back to the information contained in Table 2, real poverty is heavily concentrated in the rural interior states of Mexico, decreases in the region of Mexico City, around Monterrey and one or two other industrial centers, and decreases in the states bordering the United States. Even less poverty exists closer to the international boundary, with real income being near the highest in the nation in the northern urban border municipios.

In summary, using a single economic standard of $3,000 family income per year, possibly 85-90 percent of all Mexican families would fall in this category; up to 98 percent of the border colonia families would receive this same classification. Real poverty is a way of life in Mexico. In contrast, throughout the United States less than one family in five is classified (by annual income) as a poverty family. This ratio is higher in the American Borderland; is highest in Texas of all border states. In the border urban communities, poverty families are minimal at the Pacific Coast and increase to extremely large porportions of the total community population toward the Gulf of Mexico.

Now that the existence of real poverty in the Borderlands, especially in the American border has been documented, the next step in this analysis is to determine whether it exists among all racial/ethnic populations ind scriminately or whether it is carefully regulated so as to vary widely between such groups.

Regulated Poverty in the Borderlands

A surprise to many persons is the fact that the overwhelming number of poverty families in the American Borderland is Anglo American. In Table 4 (below) we note that the high percent of all poverty families which are Anglo is a very high 77 percent in California, 62 percent in Arizona, 45 percent in New Mexico and 58 percent in Texas. Anglo families account for about two-thirds of the poor families in the American Borderland.

[Table 4 about here]

Although at first blush the data seem to indicate Borderlands poverty as Anglo poverty, it must be remembered that the overwhelming Borderland population is Anglo and that their numerical superiority must be adjusted into a proportional ratio for comparisons between racial/ethnic Borderland populations. Returning again to Table 4 in the column showing the percent of poor within each ethnic/racial group, the disproportionate level of poverty within the minority groups becomes immediately evident. Proportionate to their percentage of the total Borderland population, Amerindians, Mexican Americans and Black Americans carry two to three times more poverty families, percentagewise, than the Anglo families.

The percent of Anglo families in poverty within each border state is surprisingly consistent, with a narrow variation ranging from the 13 percent low in California to a 21 percent high in Texas. In contrast to this are the wide variations of the minority families in poverty found among the various states. Thus, whereas California's Spanish surname population had but 19 percent of their families with incomes low enough to be classified as living in poverty, 52 percent of Texas' Spanish surname families lived on incomes below the poverty line! The non-White category had similar fluctuations beteen the California 25 percent and the other three states clustered near 57 percent poverty for their non-White families. The high Arizona and New Mexico percentages reflected the large Amerindian populations-- some on reservations-- who find in difficult to master the art of middle class education (Zintz, 1962) and who live with the triple curse of poverty, dependancy, and anonymity. In California and Texas, the non-White category reflects mostly the presence of Black Americans in the large metropolitan ghettoes and in the counties of east Texas respectively.

Previously, it was established that more than one-half of all poverty families in the American Borderland resided in the state of Texas. Therefore, it is only logical that if regulated poverty were practiced it would be most likely noticeable in this state.

A very recent analysis of family median incomes in Texas (Skrabanek and Upham, 1974) compared these with conditions a decade ago. This report found a marked decrease in all categories of families whose incomes fell below $3,000 but the relative disparity among the various racial/ethnic categories was very much as before. With this most recent data we find that only 12.4 percent of white families in Texas had poverty incomes whereas 32.7 percent of Black American and 31 percent of Spanish language or surname families remained in poverty. Barring the discovery of alternate explanations for Anglo:Minority poverty ratio of one-to-three, it might be concluded that a concious regulatory process was in operation which selectively lifted one group from poverty while ignoring the greater percentage of poor families in the minority categories.

When the analysis of Texas poverty shifts from percent of families to those individuals living in poverty as a percentage of the total population, the minorities are even worse off. In 1971, 22 percent of the total Texas population was living in poverty by HEW standards. Of these individuals, only 12.6 percent were Anglo while 45.3 percent were Mexican Americans and 44 percent were Blacks. Even though Blacks and Mexican Americans account for only 29.4 percent of the total population of Texas, together they account for 60 percent of its poor! (T.O.E.O., 1973:42). Restating these conditions in terms of median family

income (in dollars), in 1970 the Anglo American income in Texas ($8,490) was only $1,100 below the national average while the median income of Spanish language or surname and Black families was $4,133 and $4,669 below the national average. Put another way, the 1970 median family income for Blacks and Mexican Americans in Texas is just over half the median income for all other families in America. This discrepancy is much too large to be a product of chance or random variables.[10] Even the hope that these disparities might lessen through the years is gone with the evaluation of the 1960-1970 trends. Rather than the gap between these groups narrowing, during this past decade these differences have become even more pronounced. During this period of time, Anglo families gained an increased income of $3,691 as compared to the rise of only $2,801 for non-White families in Texas. And so it seems the regulation of poverty in the border continues unabated.

By analyzing the characteristics of families in poverty it is hoped that this will yield some clues as to which factors are the most crucial in producing, and therefore reducing, poverty. Because of the number of aged couples, single persons, widows or widowers, or broken families, the size of families with poverty incomes averages less than non-poverty families. Poverty families are disporportionately atypical. Moreover, these atypical families are more frequent among the racial/ethnic minorities than among the members of the dominant Anglo American group (Mittlebach and Marshall, 1966:6) which might partially account for the high poverty rates among them. However, this does not explain the fact that when Black and Mexican American households which were headed by females were compared to Anglo female-headed households, they were more than twice as likely to be poor! (T.O.E.O., 1973:42) These data conclude that even when the factors associated with atypical family units are controlled, that the huge poverty disparity between Anglos and minorities remains constant.

A further examination of Texas residents in the poverty class revealed that more than half of the poverty-prone individuals were either 65 years of age or over (18.6 percent of the poor) or under the age of 14 (33.7 percent of the poor). This again suggests the lack of financial support for the aged and atypical families (mostly minority groups) and the abnormally large number of poverty families with many young children living under the weight of poverty.

It has become popular to claim that most poverty peoples are unemployed welfare cases living in leisure while those who support them worked long and hard. It is therefore fitting to report that more jobs of the type presently held by poverty people are of little help in solving the problem. This report says:

> Over one-third (38%) of the poor adults in Texas were employed. Another 31.1% were retired, so about 70 percent of the Texas adult poor and 90 percent of poor adult males were either retired or employed.
>
> Among those not employed, 10.4 percent were seeking work. Of those not seeking work, 88 percent were females. These data suggest that poverty in Texas is not likely to be reduced very much only by providing similar additional employment for the poor [italics mine] (T.O.E.O., 1973:42)

Or as Browning and McLemore (1964:39) put it-- "in Texas unemployment is a structural, not a cyclical problem." So that even those minorities who are currently employed are paid so little as to fall below the poverty guidelines; a suspicious datum inasmuch as the basic legal minimum wage scale should bring a person above the poverty level.

These lower wages received by minorities are further reflected in the occupational comparisons of Anglos and Mexican Americans. In 1950 Mexican Americans were underrepresented in the higher paying professional category by a 1:4 ratio; in management, 1:3; and in white collar categories generally by a 1:2 ratio. As expected, in the manual occupations Mexican Americans were heavily represented, and the farm worker category showed them outnumbering Anglos 6 to 1 (Dotson, 1955:162). By 1960 (Fogel, 1965:20) the 17.6 percent Mexican Americans in urban non-manual occupations had risen only slightly to 19.0 percent, and still rarely were these in the higher income categories of the non-manual occupations.

During the 1950-1960 decade, an intensive study of occupational change among Mexican Americans in two south Texas counties showed a striking decrease in farm occupations (principally caused by the mechanization of agriculture) and with the heavy migration to urban centers, a change to non-farm work. However, their new urban occupations did little to upgrade them or give them any higher income. They were still heavily concentrated in the low income type of worker-- domestics, services and manual type work (Skrabanek and Rapton, 1966:15-18), and even the most recent summary of poverty and employment sees little change from that old scenario (T.O.E.O., 1973).

As occupational mobility raises a person's wage level above the poverty level, so an adequate background, including formal education, should be the key to occupational success. Grebler (1967) gives some hope to future generations of minorities since the "schooling gap" so prevalent between Anglos and select minorities, such as Mexican Americans, is decreasing between the younger cohorts.[11]

But Texas, 4th among the 50 states in taxable wealth for school support and claiming to have made great strides in minority education (Connally, 1967) currently ranks 38th in the actual expenditures per capita made to education. Even more serious is that the money was allocated to schools unevenly as the report of Southwest education by the Civil Rights Commission shows.

> On all four counts [State aid to local districts; property valuation within districts; rate of taxation within districts; economic burden on Anglo or Mexican American citizens] the predominantly Mexican American districts come out second best in comparisons with the predominately Anglo districts. State aid does little to equalize the disparities in revenue between these school districts. As a consequence, the amount of money spent for the education of many Chicano students is three-fifths of that spent to educate Anglo children (U.S.C.C.R., 1972:27)

In spite of inferior facilities or unequal educational opportunities, many minority students somehow attain an educational level which further qualifies them for upper status occupations and increased economic rewards. These minority members would expect similar reimbursement for their efforts as members of the dominant society with similar credentials. To determine the "cost" in lowered wages or income which can be ascribed to minority membership, various researches compared Anglos and Mexican Americans with identical education attainments and in similar occupational categories. In Texas, the incidence of poverty at every level of education was greater for Blacks and Mexican Americans than for Anglos (T.O.E.O., 1973:42). A demographic comparison of Southwest urban residents, Spanish surname and Anglo, concluded that even with similar educational achievements the Spanish surname workers had lower incomes than did the Anglos (Scott, 1972:Table 11)

To measure what economic losses in wages would be incurred simply because a person had been born a Mexican American, Poston and Alvírez (1973) measured the income levels of Anglos and Mexican Americans in the same occupational levels. They concluded that this ethnic group paid a dollar penalty of $900 each in lower annual salaries. Williams et al.(1973) in a similar research project, supported this contention of ethnic wage discrimination but claimed that of the $3,500 income differential between Anglos and Spanish surname employees, all of it except $320 could be attributed to background and education-related factors. But whether the ethnic difference for similar qualifications is $300 or $3,000 does not alter the fact that such discriminatory differences are institutionalized

in Borderlands economic systems, clearly manifesting the presence of "rigged" and regulated poverty in this region.

In Mexico, the history of the Society of Castes-- an estate system for preserving Elites-- began with the Spanish conquest and continued through the colonization and independence periods down to the present (Beals, 1965; Mörner, 1967; Cumberland, 1968). Although shifting from a caste to class stratification system during the early decades of this Century, intergenerational stability and the maintenance of hereditary elites (and its corrollary, hereditary poverty) is still very strong even with the technological upheavals of developing Mexico (Balán, 1969). Iturriaga (1951) describes Mexican rural society as comprising 1 percent upper class, 2 percent middle class and the remaining 97 being the lower or clase popular. His description of urban Mexico, with its 1 percent upper class, an expanded 23 percent middle class and the remaining 76 percent lower class, corresponds to the conclusion of other writers seeing increased opportunities for upward mobility (Gonzalez-Casanova, 1965:65-73). Thus, the historical legacy of regulated poverty in Mexico is only now undergoing some modifications with a visible, expanding middle class urban segment. But for the masses of mobile families who are most likely to relocate in the Mexican border area, poverty is still regulated by the power elite and if ones parents live in poverty there is little chance of the next generation escaping its cluches.

In summary, Mexico's rather rigid class system controls the intergenerational legacy of poverty from parents to children among the vast majority of border families. In the American Borderland, poverty is regulated by the dominant Anglo society to the detriment of the minorities within their midst.

Relative Poverty in the Borderlands

Relative poverty is mainly an ascriptive term subjectively bestowed and changing with the reference group or comparative criteria employed. Thus, a family with an abnormally low economic income might perceive non-material values as of greater importance and consider itself rich by the measure of family cohesion, moral and spiritual strength, personal dignity or compliance to religious laws and ceremonies. Likewise, a relative state of poverty might deal exclusively with economic indicators but yields differing results depending upon those persons with whom one compares his own degree of wellbeing. International and interstate comparisons might also contain an element of relativity of income as converted to purchasing power, regional or community cost of living index etc. Large international corporations as well as government and military employees given overseas tours are entitled to "allowance adjustments" when their assignment carries them to an area with a relatively high cost-of-living level. These are only a few of the relative poverty comparisons which might be undertaken.

For the consumer or tourist making purchases in the American border area, a poverty income becomes a highly elastic criterion unless it is converted into actual purchasing power. In low wage, low income areas, many times the lower labor costs create a much lower retail price for locally produced products. For example, a haircut costing $2.50 in El Paso might be obtained for less than $1 (U.S. dollars) in Cd. Juárez across the Rio Grande. Or fresh pineapples in local American border stores priced at 49¢ each might sell for 4 or 5 for $1 (U.S.) in Mexico. To further illustrate this point, let us again analyze the 1960 median family incomes among the various border states and compare this to its relative buying power, labeled as Effective Buying Income per Household for 1966 (E.D.A., 1968:144, Table 11). One additional dimension within this comparison is the relative poverty reflected in median family income vs household buying power. The highest median family income for all border states was the $6,726 of California, the median range reflected by Arizona's $5,568 and New Mexico's $4,371. Texas was sustantially lower at $4,884. Now shifting our emphasis to the level of effective buying income, California is still highest with $9,138 per household followed by the remaining three states all within $200 above or below the $7,500 figure. Although Texas placed extremely low among the border states in median family income, it was ranked in a three-way tie for second place in effective buying income per household. Is this a reflection of the relatively low cost of living in the border which would significantly alter the meaning of low family income in that area? Or might it reveal a data-handling bias of the U.S. Census inasmuch as their definitions for a family unit might not correspond to the functional household unit so prominent among the border ethnic/racial minorities? The real poverty, differentially borne by border minorities, could be as much a function of census determination of "a family" as the absolute shortage of money for purchasing family necessities. Moreover, a life quality standard which takes into consideration the economic variations in maintaining it from region to region might find a poverty income sufficient to live comfortably at a minimal standard in one location whereas an income far above the poverty line might yeild a lower life quality level in an area where the costs for basic necessities are substantially higher.

Another aspect to be considered in assessing the relative nature of poverty becomes clear when the issue is raised "...present undesirable economic conditions (i.e. poverty level income) as compared with what? During his research on the self-imagry of Mexican immigrants, as compared to second and later generation Mexican Americans, Dworkin (1965) found that the first generation immigrant, the economic refugee, was much more satisfied with his current poverty conditions

than was the second or later generations with more affluence. In comparing his circumstances with his previous privations in Mexico, he considered himself economically affluent by comparison. However, the successive generations shifted their criteria for the quality life to American standards, complete with the American Dream of financial success *a la Horatio Alger* model. Although better off financially than the immigrant generation, the second and later Mexican Americans were relatively poorer because the American standards of success, wealth and aspirations to achieve were far different than the Mexican standards used by the immigrant generation to measure their own economic circumstances.

It has been said that in the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is King. Nowhere is this more applicable than in the Borderlands. A Mexican mother living in a Cd. Juárez *colonia* suburb might be grateful to work as a live-in domestic in an El Paso home for $25-30 per week. She is able to hire a "Juárez maid" to care for her own family for this same period for one-third to one-half of her own earnings. Such a wage would place the family in the real poverty category, but relative to the maid wage scale in Mexico, this very low wage by American standards enables her to raise her standard of living in the Cd Juárez *colonia*.

The more than 18,000 U.S. citizens who live in Mexico at much less cost while crossing daily to work in the United States, expand their real income considerably in terms of buying power and living standards of their families. Likewise, the 40,000 Mexican citizens permitted to commute daily to their work in the United States (1967) though working for low real wages, were thrilled at the high "relative wages" they were receiving. Even the illegal Mexican alien whose plight is told by the mass media in terms of suffering and exploitation, is relatively much better off working for wages below the legal minimum in U.S. agriculture than to do the same work in Mexico for far less money![12] A case history of one family of illegal Mexicans whichhas resided in the United States for more than a decade illustrates the complex problem of evaluating relative poverty.

"Penetrating the System..."[13]

Beto and Lupe, together with their four small children, are illegal Mexican aliens (commonly referred to as 'wetbacks'). For more than a decade now, Beto has supported his family by working in the U.S. as an illegal alien, and during most of that time the entire family has resided in this country with him. This is a short summary of them, their sacrifices, hopes and dreams.

Beto Hernandez was the third child in a family of thirteen children. Born in Parral, Mexico, he moved with the family to Las Barras (southern part of Chihuahua) at the death of his father in 1961. Beto was 26 years old,

the time when he dropped out of school in the second grade, he had been a field laborer or sheepherder, often working with his father. The economic pressures on his family demanded that each child seek work as early as practical; and for that reasion, only three of the 13 children even completed la primaria.

For his first work experience Beto followed his father's occupation as sheepherder, later changing to field work and ultimately learning to drive a tractor and other mechanized farm equipment. While in Mexico, his highest wages were 18 pesos ($1.50 U.S. dollars) per day. So, when he had a chance at age 18 to earn $10 a day as a bracero, he came to Eagle Pass, Texas, and worked there eight months. After just four months at home, he returned again as a bracero-- this time to the Roswell, New Mexico region-- staying for 15 months. Prior to this last tour, he had asked Lupe Amaya to marry him, and she had agreed providing that he would send money back from his bracero labors and await his return to marry her. They were married in 1962 at the Church in Saucillo, Mexico, and immediately moved to his mother's recently vacated house and began to work the "family farm" plot.

Lupe Amaya, the fourth of 7 living children, was born during World War II and grew up in Saucillo, Mexico. When but twelve years of age, her father died and her oldest brother assumed the financial responsibility for the family although he was but 19 years of age at the time. All members of the family were obliged to find work and help support the other family members. Mrs. Amaya took in washing and did ironing at home, earning 24¢ (U.S.) per dozen pieces. She had only a wood stove to heat her water and on which she kept hot her hand iron. Lupe completed la primaria and then continued on for one more year when, at age 13, she found work at a small neighborhood store (de aborotes) working from 7 A.M. to 9 P.M. Monday through Saturday. For these long hours she received a paltry $150 pesos ($12 U.S. dollars) per month at the beginning and even after six or seven years experience had only raised her wages to $300 pesos a month. She quit work to marry Beto and moved with him to his family's farm plot. Her brother, who married and brought their wives into the Amaya household, were able to depart from the family only when the next youngest brother was able to support the rest of the family financially. It was a model of family unity and sacrifice to see all contribute to the family support and that all but one of the seven children completed at least la primaria.

Years before Beto and Lupe set up their own household, Beto's older brother, Raúl, had worked as a bracero at the Parra Farms in Texas. After the continuation of the bracero program, he returned again as an illegal alien and continued as a farm hand. The farm owners helped him to "get his papers fixed" and he was issued a "Green Card" to cross the border daily as a commuter worker although he resided on the farm in the U.S. full time. Soon his wife joined him and her papers were also fixed. As Raúl worked hard and had more years at the farm, he was given more responsibility and a higher income. As the foremen and bosses above him left for higher paying jobs elsewhere, eventually Raúl became the top foreman on the sprawling Parra Farms.

Meanwhile, Beto and Lupe were not having any success on the small family plot in Saucillo. Beto's mother, who had moved to Cd. Juárez, suggested to Beto that he come up to the border (la frontera) where his brother could get him a job as a farm hand in the U.S. In 1964 he came.

Beto was spirited across the river to the Parra Farms by his brother. But Raúl was unable to get Beto's papers "fixed" because the current "Green Card" quota was exhausted. If Beto remained it would have to be as an illegal alien, which he did. He lived on the farm, working only one or two days per week as work was available. Even this part-time work paid him more real income than he received in Mexico working a full seven days a week! Within a few months he saved enough money to bring Lupe and his children to Cd. Juárez to live with his mother, where he could commute on weekends by "crossing the river." After three years, he was able to relocate all of his family into a one room adobe house in a small Mexican hamlet directly across from the farmland which he worked. One year later he had enough steady work to where the farm owners allowed him to bring his entire family across to live in a large one room adobe house located right on the Parra Farms themselve

When Beto began working for the Parra Farms eleven years ago, he was paid $.80 per hour (U.S.). His family lived in the adobe room which had running water and electricity but no bathroom. Now, nearly a dozen years later, they still live there with their two-burner camp stove, small table and four chairs, three twin beds and an "outhouse" nearby. To this "furnished house" they have added an electric refrigerator and a TV set, and the old 1966 Ford parked in front belongs to them!

He pays no income tax nor social security so that his present $1.60 per hour is all net income. With this farm shifting its major emphasis from cotton to pecan orchards, he has acquired valuable skills in the grafting, pruning and care of the trees and of the harvested pecans. He is a well

trained, essential part of the farm's labor force. He has security, and is far better off than his friends who remained behind in Mexico. It does not trouble him that he does not live at the same luxury level as the American families who reside in this same general area; only that there is a steady income and education for his children.

When they first arrived, the only family recreation available was to walk around the farm or to visit with Raúl and his wife Cecilia, or the other farm laborer families. But after living here some years, Beto was able to establish credit at an El Paso department store (assisted by the farm officials who co-signed with him) and was able to purchase a refrigerator on a time schedule of low monthly payments. When this was paid for, they purchased a television set, and then an automobile! While struggling in Mexico during those earliest years of married life, never in their wildest dreams did they imagine being able to take a ride in a car when they chose, or to drive it, to say nothing of being the proud owner of a 1966 model used car. Now they are able to take their children to the parks in nearby communities. From time to time they drive to El Paso and see a drive-in movie, and on Sundays the family gets in the car and drives to the house of friends in surrounding areas. They consider themselves rich; and in a relative sense, they are!

Although the real income of Beto and Lupe falls far below the poverty level as measured by current indices, their comparative wealth in relationship to their status in Mexico borders on luxurious living. This indicates that real and relative wealth may not be components of the same economic system and therefore cannot be conceptually analyzed as a single phenomenon.

If the border economic system, as suggested, does indeed divide up scarcity, then the practice of sharing border income with alien labor diminishes that portion for citizen income. To continue the open border means the sharing of border poverty with Mexican border residents which tends to raise the Mexican median family income while reducing it for American residents. On the other hand, to close the border completely would erase the relative advantages which attract tourists and businesses engaged in "free zone trade" and thus lower the already low economic base of the region. So whether these relative aspects of poverty are or are not dysfunctional for maintaining a minimum quality of life for border residents, especially minorities, these differing, relative standards for determining what poverty is and to what extent it flourishes abound in the Borderlands.

During the period when the Great Society social action programs were inaugurated (which first established the formal economic guidelines for identifying "poverty in America") much stress was placed on informational programs to make the poverty families aware of their plight. For some of the older citizens whose struggle for survival extended back into the Great Depression of the 1930's, today's poverty did not seem as alarming as for those who had not had those experiences. In earlier days it was a foregone conclusion that there had always been poor families in every society, even our own, and it was also possible that we might always have the poor with us. But with the War on Poverty and related programs, poverty families were made to believe that poverty need not be tolerated in America, that there was much evidence of wealth and affluence among other families all about them, and that the American creed guaranteed an equal right to a better education and a higher income in a respectable occupation. These families were still in economic difficulty but were no longer content with their present economic conditions.

This change in awareness is accompanied by drastic changes in the criteria used to identify and measuring the degree of suffering brought about by poverty. Hence, relative deprivation becomes thought of as relative deprivation, possibly a new monster created as a latent consequence of the social experiments of the recent past. When persons begin to measure poverty in terms of their relative standing with others, invidious comparisons can always be made with those who currently have a higher income. As measured by this relative standard, all American families except the one at the top, are poor. Even if every family in America were made millionaires by legislative action, compared with the few multi-millionaires in their midst, all would be relatively poor. The only conclusion to be made from this discussion of relative poverty is, then, that relative poverty in America will never be erradicated as long as any family or person possesses any item, service or opportunity not immediately accessible to all others. Therefore, in policy terms, it might be more proptious for those concerned with human welfare in the Borderlands to disengage themselves from feeding the insatiable appetite of relative poverty and, instead, direct their energies toward the possible solutions for real and regulated poverty in this region.

Summary of Findings

As a region, the U.S.- Mexico Borderlands is poverty-prone. Currently, the U.S. Borderland has an extremely narrow economic base and is poorly suited to attract basic industry which would help to broaden it. At present, with the large reservoirs of unskilled labor, the region attracts the low wage industries that do little to increase wages or to built up investment capital. So without outside stimulation, the American Borderland has a perennial economic problem. The high fertility rate of the area results in a high dependency ratio which is only slightly lessened by out-migration. The major economic growth within the region in recent years has been expenditures in the public sector, initially more at the federal level, but now increasingly more state and local funds. However, dependancy on government spending and its other major economic asset, tourism, produces a very capricious and unstable base for healthy economic growth.

The American Borderland is saturated with real poverty, the majority of which is located in the state of Texas. Poverty families are fewest in California and increase steadily toward the lower Texas valley. Moreover, the density of poverty families increases in the county jurisdictions adjacent to the international boundary. The Mexican Borderland also contains a great number of poverty families although poverty is more extreme in Mexico's interior and becomes less toward the U.S. border area northward.

Our data strongly support the existence of regulated poverty, that is, the pattern of poverty being disproportionately found among the racial/ethnic minorities of the region. Even those minorities with equal formal education and occupational skills of their Anglo cohorts are paid less for doing the same work. This aspect of regulated poverty, or economic discrimination, appears to be so deeply institutionalized as to be invulnerable to legislation and administrative regulations. Although better educational opportunities appear to be the hope for the future of these minority youth, even current expenditures are used more to assist Anglo education than that of Mexican Americans or Blacks or Amerindians. While Mexico has perpetuated its caste society of elites and poor and currently continues it through socio-economic inheritance of one's parents, in the American Borderland poverty is regulated according to racial and ethnic differences.

Relative poverty exists in the Borderlands as it does everywhere. The new Mexican immigrant is grateful for his newly found wealth (a poverty U.S. life style) relative to what he had to look forward to in his former nation. Second generation immigrants, using American standards for the quality of life they enjoy, are dissatisfied and relatively deprived according to what they see about them and what they have been told to expect. Also the War on Poverty program has caused

the less fortunate families of our society to be aware of their plight and to demand better opporunities for economic betterment. But it seems that there will be relative poverty as long as one person does not have everything which all other persons have, and is aware of his relative shortage, and labels it poverty!

Whereas poor Mexican citizens find an economic haven in the United States (even coming here illegally) compared to the opportunities and wages in their own country, they raise their standard of living apparently at the expense of the U.S. border resident, especially the unemployed, unskilled minority family living on the border. However, since the extensive trade with neighboring Mexico produces a great deal of the border wealth, the border cannot be closed without severe economic repercussions.

In general terms, this study encourages policy-makers to avoid expending time, energies and legislative sleight-of-hand to remove relative poverty with its insatiable kleidescope of new wants and needs, and to instead concentrate their efforts on reducing real poverty. A major focus in the American Borderland should be to remove the factors which produce and perpetuate regulated poverty so that minority Americans of that region will not have to pay indirectly for the affluence of the other residents of the region.

FOOTNOTES

* This is a revised and expanded version of a paper presented at the Rural Sociological Society annual meeting, San Francisco, August 1975.

1- See the definitive discussions in Stoddard (1974:17-20; 1975b: Introduction to Borderlands Symposium). Also American borderland delimited (Nostrand, 1970), described as a "border belt" of poverty (Galarza, 1972:267-269), and treated as a distinct region by many historians, geographers and social science scholars.

2- The six Mexican states are: Baja California (norte), Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo León and Tamaulipas. The four American states are: California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. These two Borderland regions form a natural laboratory for cross-cultural research (see Stoddard, 1969)

3- The "twin plant" concept is a lure to American corporations looking for large numbers of inexpensive workers for hand-assembly operations and the like. Two plants are established in twin border cities to shuttle the products to Mexico for assembly and back to the U.S. for completion and shipping without being assessed import-export duties(For critique, see Calderón, 1973)

4- For background on CODAF and its demise, see E.D.A.(1968:11-15) and Stoddard (1973a:234). An overview of the Mexican Border Industrial program and its impact on the U.S. is found in Evans (1972) and James and Evans (1974).

5- For a list of the border twin cities, see Stoddard (1974:49-50, footnote 5.)

6- Last minute bureaucratic changes in the 1970 U.S. Census procedures made the measurement and analysis of Spanish surname data more difficult by using different criteria from the 1950 and 1960 definitions (Hernández et al., 1973). As a practical matter, the raw data tapes for Spanish language and surname populations were becoming available for demographic analysis as late as mid-1974. Therefore, the more complete 1960 data for border counties and states in the Borderlands region were used and specific, fragmented 1970 data furnished any changes from the earlier trends.

7- Census data on Spanish surname Americans are kept in five states-- the four border states and Colorado. Although this minority group in Colorado is a very significant population of that state, Colorado was excluded from this border analysis because its territorial boundaries do not extend to the international border.

8- Although the assimilation model has been a popular approach for the dominant society to use in setting forth minority betterment programs, the new ethnic

emphasis on cultural identity and autonomy formulated during the minority and Civil Rights movements of the 1950-1960 era eschews assimilation as the only feasible means for achieving upward mobility (see Portes 1974b)

9- Our nation is at a critical point in energy consumption and alternate energy sources. Should a scientific breakthrough make fusion a viable source of inexpensive power, or if vast oil deposits in Mexico would transform that country into a major economic World power with a family income equal to that of the United States, the entire border situation would show enormous changes. If a major national water project were to bring Columbia basin or Mississippi river water into the parched Southwest, the industrial growth of the area would be assured. Technological breakthroughs in solar power, a plentiful Southwest commodity, could bring new dimensions to the Borderlands. But, these are long shots at best. Realistically, none of the above will alter the relative poverty of the border or its inability to attract industry.

10- Although Texas has been singled out from the other border states for more intensive poverty analyses, a cursory visual comparison of the percentage of Spanish surname in a border county population with its percentage of poverty in that group (Table 3) shows that this pattern holds true in other states as well, in their border counties.

11- The optimistic reports of a trend toward closing the "schooling gap" among the various Southwest ethnic groups are hardly borne out by incomplete 1970 data. In the U.S. as a whole, adults completed 12.1 years of formal education; Texans only slightly less at 11.9. Texas Negro adults completed 9.6 years while the Spanish language or surname category trailed at 7.3 years. The average increase of adult Texans in formal schooling completed rose by 1.2 years from 1960 to 1970, but the increases of minorities were similar, thus maintaining the "schooling gap" relatively unchanged during this past decade of intense minority education and social action programs (Skrabanek and Upham, 1974:26-27).

12- Although the illegal Mexican alien as an "economic refugee" (Fragomen, 1973) can better himself financially in the United States, and is openly encouraged and protected by border institutions (Stoddard, 1975a), his presence creates a moral dilemma of conformity to law as well being an economic and identity anathema to Mexican Americans on the border (Briggs, 1974; Bustamante, 1972; Spicer, 1970). During periods of economic growth in the U.S., illegal Mexican labor is encouraged (Samora, 1971) but as the full cycle of economic downturn emerges, politically popular legislative codes are enacted to curtail the problem (Hohl and Wenk, 1971) and after economic revival, they will be welcomed back again.

13- This is an excerp from a case study I wrote for publication in Arthur F. Corwin (ed) Mexican Labor and Settlement in the United States-Vol. II (1940-1970) and is included here with his permission. Its complete title is: "Penetrating the System: A Case Study of a Mexican Family Residing in the United States as Illegal Aliens".

Table 1

Personal Income of Border SMSA Residents

as Earned from Selected Economic Sources (1966)

SMSA	Personal Income Level		Economic Source of Personal Income (%)			
	In $	% of U.S. average	Manufacturing	Public Sector[a]	Agriculture[b]	Trade[c]
San Diego	3,149	106	13.4	33.6		
Tucson	2,468	83	7.3	21.5		
El Paso	2,288	77	11.4	34.4		
Laredo	1,250	42	3.1	27.5	7.8	20.1
McAllen	1,379	47	5.5	15.6	15.6	18.6
Brownsville	1,725	58	8.2	23.2	11.2	15.7
U.S. Average	2,658	100	24.3	13.0	1.0	13.6

a= includes military, state and local government
b= Tucson and El Paso would be affected indirectly by agriculture beyond the SMSA
c= Includes wholesale and retail

Source: E.D.A., 1968:60-61

Table 2

Percentage of Families Earning Various Levels of Annual Income for Mexico, Cd. Juarez and Cd. Juarez Suburb (1970-1971)

Annual Family Income (dollars)[a]	Percentage of Families in Income Level		
	Mexico	Cd. Juarez	Cd Juarez Suburb
Up to $499	42	21	19
$500-1,499	35	54	75
$1,500-9,999	13	24	6
$10,000 or more	10	1	-

a= approximated from monthly income in Pesos.

Source: Ugalde, 1974:32, Table 14 (modified)

Table 3

Percentage of Families According to Income Class by County, U.S.- Mexico Border (1960)

State: County (Urban Area)	% of population with Spanish surname	Percentage of Families earning-			
		Under $3,000	$3,000-5,999	$6,000-9,999	$10,000 & over
California:	8.0	14.1	27.5	36.6	21.8
San Diego (San Diego)	6.3	15.1	28.6	36.2	20.1
Imperial(El Centro/Calexico)	33.1	21.0	35.0	28.6	15.4
Arizona:	19.5	21.3	34.1	30.2	14.4
Yuma (Yuma)	20.1	20.2	37.4	28.8	13.6
Pima	16.7	18.5	35.7	30.9	15.0
Santa Cruz (Nogales)	57.6	30.4	35.5	21.9	12.1
Cochise (Bisbee/Douglas)	25.0	22.0	41.2	26.6	10.3
New Mexico:	18.1	24.4	32.6	28.6	14.3
Hidalgo	40.0[a]	28.5	37.5	23.4	10.6
Grant	47.2	24.7	43.6	23.9	7.8
Luna	34.4	32.7	38.5	19.6	9.2
Dona Ana	42.1	25.4	35.7	25.4	13.5
Texas:	58.8	28.8	33.7	25.8	11.8
El Paso (El Paso)	43.6	22.0	38.2	27.0	12.7
Hudspeth	66.0[a]	32.5	36.2	23.0	8.3
Culberson	40.0[a]	29.4	45.4	17.8	7.4
Jeff Davis	55.0[a]	34.5	41.8	16.3	7.3
Presidio	49.4	28.3	33.8	19.1	8.8
Brewster	42.6	35.3	39.5	16.6	8.6
Terrell	51.0[a]	34.2	25.3	21.4	19.1
Val Verde (Del Rio)	44.2	37.3	35.3	16.7	10.7
Kinney	53.0[a]	43.4	29.7	12.6	14.3
Maverick (Eagle Pass)	77.6	58.0	26.6	11.2	4.1
Webb (Laredo)	79.9	50.8	30.4	13.2	5.6
Zapata	74.8	65.5	22.0	9.9	2.6
Starr	88.7	71.4	17.0	9.1	2.5
Hidalgo (McAllen)	71.4	53.8	26.0	13.7	6.5
Cameron(Brownsville/Harl'gton)	61.0	57.3	29.8	16.0	6.9
Regional Total (4 border states)	27.8				
U.S. Total		21.4	32.8	30.8	15.1

a= 1960 data not available, estimate from 1950 data

Source: E.D.A., 1968: Tables 4,12(revised)

Table 4

Poverty Families[1] in Various Population Groups

in Four Southwest Border States (1960)

State Population Totals, ethnic categories	Families with Poverty Incomes (number and percent)		
	Total number of families	Percent of poor in each group	Poor of group as percent of all poor
California:			
Total- all families	3,991,500		
Total-poor families	562,710	14.1	100.0
-Anglo	435,849	12.8	77.4
-Spanish surname	58,256	19.1	10.4
-Non-White[a]	68,605	24.8	12.2
Arizona:			
Total- all families	312,036		
Total-poor families	66,345	21.3	100.0
-Anglo	41,155	16.4	62.0
-Spanish surname	11,312	30.8	17.1
-Non-White[b]	13,878	57.8	20.9
New Mexico:			
Total- all families	221,951		
Total-poor families	54,180	24.4	100.0
-Anglo	24,083	15.6	44.5
-Spanish surname	22,555	41.5	41.6
-Non-White[b]	7,542	56.3	13.9
Texas:			
Total- all families	2,392,564		
Total-poor families	687,965	28.8	100.0
-Anglo	395,598	21.3	57.5
-Spanish surname	139,663	51.6	20.3
-Non-White[a]	152,704	57.7	22.2
Borderland Region:			
Total- all families	6,918,051		
Total-poor families	1,371,200	19.8	

1= Under $3,000 annual family income in 1959
a= Chiefly Blacks but including all other non-White minorities
b= Chiefly Amerindians but including all other non-White minorities

Source: Mittlebach and Marshall, 1966: Table 6 (revised)

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